

MULTILINGUALISM AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN WUJI VILLAGE, HAINAN PROVINCE, PR CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Wuji Village, situated in Hainan Province, PR China, is linguistically diverse with Danzhounese, Modern Standard Chinese (MSC), Hakka, Cantonese, Hainanese, and Lin'gao regularly spoken. In profiling vernacular languages and language attitudes in Wuji Village, this paper features a survey investigating the villagers' language abilities and perspectives. A literature review of the linguistic situation and language attitudes in Hainan Province is followed by an introduction to Wuji Village, including its location, residents, villagers' livelihoods, village religion, and the local linguistic environment. A survey of language abilities and attitudes in Wuji Village indicates that villagers' attitudes towards the village languages vary. While emotional attachment to Danzhounese is deeply rooted, it is weakening, with most participants agreeing that all villagers must learn MSC. Wuji Village's linguistic profile merits further study in the context of vernacular language marginalization, language attrition, language shift, and vernacular language maintenance.

KEYWORDS

Chinese language attitudes, Chinese multilingualism, Chinese vernaculars, Danzhou, dialects of China, Hainan Province languages

INTRODUCTION

Wuji Village (19°38'18.64"N and 109°31'54.17"E) is within the administration of Nada Town, Danzhou City, in northwestern Hainan Province, PR China. Subject to a tropical monsoon ocean climate, with an average annual temperature of 23.1°C and rainfall of 1,823 mm,¹ Wuji borders Zixi, Zhongjianxiang, and Dalandi villages.

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¹ From https://www.danzhou.gov.cn/danzhou/zjdz/201712/t20171221_1519295.html (accessed 14 June 2020).

FIG 1. Wuji Village, Nada Town, Danzhou City, Hainan Province, the People's Republic of China.¹



Wuji is linguistically diverse with Danzhounese/the Tan-Chou dialect,² Modern Standard Mandarin (MSC),³ Hakka,⁴ Cantonese,⁵ Hainanese (MSC, Hainanhua),⁶ and the Lin'gao

¹ This map is a compilation of images from <https://bit.ly/3hyIaRC>, <https://bit.ly/3fqcige>, and <https://bit.ly/2Y5ccVt> (accessed 16 June 2020).

² A Sino-Tibetan language/dialect (Chen 1986). For more on Danzhounese, see Ting (1980), Liang (1984), Chen (1988), and Liu (2001). "Danzhounese" is used hereafter.

³ Also known as Putonghua "the official name of the standard language in the People's Republic of China" (Norman 1988:137). MSC accents adjust to the language environments in Hainan Province and change accordingly (Liu 1998). The MSC accents in Wuji Village and urban Danzhou City differ; nevertheless, MSC is used hereafter for the sake of simplicity.

⁴ A southern Chinese language/dialect (Chen 1986:1). For more on Hakka, see Liu (2001) and Kurpaska (2010).

⁵ A Yue dialect (Matthews and Yip 2011). For more on Cantonese, see Kurpaska (2010).

⁶ A Southern Min dialect (Kurpaska 2010:39, Solnit 1982:219, Liu 2001:48, and Chen 1986:88).

language/dialect¹ commonly spoken. To profile the linguistic situation in Wuji Village and better describe villagers' language attitudes, I conducted a language study.

This paper features a literature review of the linguistic situation and language attitudes in Hainan Province and Wuji Village's location, residents, villagers' livelihoods, village religion, and the local linguistic environment. The results of a survey of Wuji Villagers' language abilities and sentiments regarding Danzhounese, Hakka, and MSC profile languages spoken in Wuji Village and villagers' language attitudes. The survey explores the villagers' language competencies, ages and MSC fluency, language attitudes, and how they acquired these (vernacular) languages. Finally, findings and limitations are included, and suggestions are made regarding future research to advance studies of Danzhounese and other vernaculars spoken in the village.

THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN HAINAN PROVINCE: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Liang (1984), Chen (1986), Wurm et al. (1988), Liu (2001), Zhang (2006), and Ouyang (2010) researched Hainan Province's languages/dialects and their classification/distribution, including languages/dialects in Danzhou City, and described Hainan Province as linguistically diverse and deserving further studies. Liang (1984:264-265) reported that apart from MSC, vernacular languages spoken in Danzhou City include Danzhounese, Junhua,² and Hakka, neglecting other vernaculars, e.g., Hainanese and Cantonese. Chen (1986), Wu (1988), and Liu (2001) noted that MSC, Hakka, Danzhounese, Cantonese, and Junhua are spoken in Danzhou City. Furthermore, Hainan Miaoyu,³ Hainanese, and Lin'gao are also spoken in Danzhou City (Liu 2001; Chen 1986).

According to Liang (1984:267) and Ting (1980:7-16), colloquial and literary Danzhounese are two Danzhounese spoken codes with differing phonological features, representing the primary spoken form of conversational Danzhounese and conventional pronunciations/ sounds used for reading Chinese characters, respectively.

Concerning the classification of Danzhounese, Wurm et al. (1988) placed it in the Yue group while Ting (1980:24-25) reported that Danzhounese, from a phonological perspective, is an unclassified "new dialect of South China" rather than a variety of Min, Yue, or Hakka. Liang (1984:267) argued that colloquial Danzhounese retains Cantonese linguistic properties and belongs to the Yue group; however, literary Danzhounese and the dialects of North China (Mandarin dialects) have shared phonological features; consequently, literary Danzhounese is a Mandarin dialect. According to Lin (2009), Danzhounese shares linguistic features of the Yue, Hakka, and Gan dialects (as cited in Chin 2015:142).

Chen (1988), based on a comparison of Danzhounese phonology and vocabulary from a historical perspective, concludes Danzhounese is a variant of old Cantonese. Liu (2001), Wu (1988), and Liang (1984) considered Danzhounese "an unclassified non-Mandarin dialect" (as cited in Kurpaska 2010:73). As is apparent, the classification of Danzhounese is an ongoing discussion.

Although there has been little investigation of language attitudes towards vernaculars in Danzhou City, a few studies on attitudes towards vernacular languages in Sanya City, Hainan Province have been conducted. Feng (2013) used questionnaires to explore Li language attitudes in four villages of Sanya City and reported that Li people, whose Liyu abilities varied significantly, were passionate

¹ Also known as the Ong-be language, a subgroup of the Kra-Dai language family (Zhang and Ma 1983:45, Liu 2001:47-48, and Chen 2018:1-3). See Chen (1986) for more on Lin'gao language, which I hereafter refer to as Lin'gao.

² A Southwest Mandarin dialect (Liu 2001, Qiu 2002, Norquest 2015).

³ A Mian language/dialect (Liu 2001, Chen 1986).

about learning and preserving Liyu, while also feeling positive about learning MSC and Hainanese, which they believed brought economic benefit. Using questionnaires and interviews, Mao (2019) studied Dan¹ speakers' language attitudes about the Dan language/dialect, Hainanese, and MSC in Sanya City villages from a sociolinguistic perspective and reported that Dan was viewed less positively than in the past. Its domain of use was predominantly at home or when fishing at sea. Dan speakers actively learned MSC, which had gradually replaced the Dan's position as the dominant language spoken in the Sanya City focus villages.

WUJI VILLAGE

VILLAGE RESIDENTS

In March 2020, Wuji Village had 218 households (941 residents). Han and Li people are ninety-eight and two percent of Wuji's population, respectively.²

Most Wuji Han residents report that their ancestors migrated from Guangdong and Fujian provinces, or Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Li residents in the village state that they are descendants of Hainan Province's indigenous Li people. Peng et al. (2011) argued that Li ancestors in Hainan Province were likely from southern mainland China and Vietnam, based on mitochondrial DNA tests of 285 Li people.

According to the 1977 Hainan census (Ouyang and Zheng 1980),³ most Li (626,000) live in Hainan Li-Miao Autonomous Prefecture and speak Liyu 'the Hlai languages'; other Li live in the prefecture's nearby cities and *sheng zhixia xianji xingzhengqu* 'provincial-controlled counties', such as Chengmai County in northern Hainan Province; and a small number reside in the counties of Wanning, Qionghai, and Baisha⁴ (Ouyang and Zheng 1980:1). Shearer and Hongkai (2002) reported Liyu speakers numbered about 747,000, including Cunhua⁵ and Nadouhua⁶ speakers (as cited in Norquest 2015:4). Guo (2006) noted that the Li population approached 1,247,814 in 2000, with some Li residing in Danzhou City. The Statistics Bureau of Hainan Province (2019) reports 1,514,780 Li accounted for approximately ninety percent of Hainan Province's total ethnic minority population.⁷

A small percentage of Li residents primarily communicate in MSC in Wanning, Qionghai, and Baisha counties. In contrast, Li residents in Baoting, Ya, Lingshui, and Qiongzhong counties are bilingual in Liyu and MSC (Ouyang and Zheng 1980:1). According to Liu (2001:45-46) and Chen (1986:93-96), Liyu includes the Xiao, Qi, Bendi, Meifu, and Jiamao dialects;⁸ and a majority of speakers of the Xiao, Qi, and Meifu dialects are fluent in MSC and Hainanese. Bendi speakers are generally proficient in Danzhounese, and most also speak Hainanese and MSC. Liu (2001:46) also noted that the five dialects of Liyu mentioned above share similar phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. Additionally, Cunhua is a language branch of Liyu rather than a dialect of Liyu (Ouyang and Fu 1988). Nadouhua is a subgroup of Liyu (Fu 1990).

¹ A Chinese indigenous language (Lin 1931 in Mao 2019:93) that is considered a Yue dialect (Chen 1986:98) with features of the Min group (Zhuang 2009 in Mao 2019:93).

² A prefecture government employee provided village population data.

³ I was unable to find more recent data on the number of Liyu speakers.

⁴ The contemporary Wanning City, Qionghai City, and Baisha Li Autonomous County, Hainan Province, respectively.

⁵ A Hlai language/dialect. For more on Cunhua, see Norquest (2015).

⁶ A critically endangered Hlai language/dialect with about 2,500 speakers (Fu 1990:14, Norquest 2015:5).

⁷ From www.hainan.gov.cn (accessed 1 April 2020).

⁸ Liyu includes the Xiao, Qi, Miefu, Bendi, and Jiamao dialects (Liu 2001). For more on Liyu dialects, see Norquest (2015).

VILLAGE LIVELIHOODS

Villagers self-report to the government that they are farmers, cultivating wetland rice, rubber, and Hainan *capsicum chinense* 'habanero peppers'; and raising chicken, ducks, buffalo, and pigs.¹ After marriage, young villagers generally engage in migrant labor in Guangdong Province in manufacturing, i.e., mask- and clothes-making, steel production, or water-cleaning factories. Typically, they leave their children with their parents at home and provide financial support. Some villagers work in municipal Danzhou City as truck drivers, hotel cleaners, restaurant staff, and manual laborers in building construction.

Villagers born around the year 2000 typically discontinued education after high school, married, had children, and engaged in migrant labor in Guangdong Province. Villagers born before 1980 were generally satisfied with their current lives and were unwilling to engage in migrant labor outside of Hainan Province. Most had built their own two-story brick-concrete house; had grandchildren to care for; and worked as cooks in K-12 school cafeterias, truck drivers, and neighborhood security guards in municipal Danzhou or Haikou cities.

FIG 2. A wetland rice field in Wuji Village (May 2020, Fu Qidu). Wuji and neighboring villages are known for their *zongzi* 'leaf-wrapped sticky rice dumplings' (Roufs and Roufs 2014:81), especially meat *zongzi*. *Zongzi* in Wuji Village are variously shaped, stuffed with different fillings, and wrapped in bamboo leaves. In general, Wuji villagers make and eat meat *zongzi* during Duanwu 'the Dragon Boat Festival' on the fifth day of the fifth Chinese month and Chunjie 'the Chinese New Year'.² In mainland China, eating *zongzi* is common during Duanwu, but not Chunjie.



¹⁹ A prefecture government employee provided data on villager occupations.

² The first day of the first Chinese lunisolar month.

FIG 3. A rubber tree field in Wuji Village (May 2020, Fu Qidu).



FIG 4. Residents surnamed Fu in Wuji, Zhongjianxiang, Zixi, and Dalandi villages honor General Fu Nanjin as their ancestor. The characters on his tomb, located in Zhongjianxiang Village, read (center) *Ming huangtaizu chifeng weiwu dajiangjun funanjin gong zhi* '(Tomb) of Fu Nanjin, entitled "mighty general" by the first Ming emperor' (June 2020, Fu Qidu).



FIG 5. The General Fu Nanjin image in Zhongjiangxiang Village (June 2020, Fu Qidu). The characters read *Fu nanjin mingdai weiwu dajiangjun* 'Fu Nanjin - Ming Dynasty mighty general'.



VILLAGE RELIGION

Some Wuji villagers engage in religious practices and activities. For instance, some worship *dwuen* (MSC, *shen*¹) 'deities', including Taoist and Buddhist deities and historical figures such as Yudi,² Guanyin/Kuan-yin,³ and Guanyu.⁴ There are multiple public *szihueng* (MSC, *citang*) 'ancestral temples' and *dwuenwo* (MSC, *shenwu*) 'temples for deity-worship' in the village.

When seeing indications in one's house of *ling*,⁵ e.g., frogs or bats, villagers may consult a *tongzi*.⁶ When a deity possesses a *tongzi*, the *tongzi* communicates with and speaks for the deity. Some villagers believed that the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic was because of *baoying* 'cosmic moral retribution' (Brokaw 1991:28) in response to people's lax religious faith and practice. *Dwuen* were angry that some people venerated them in times of difficulty but neglected them during good times. When villagers encounter bad luck, they may pray to a deity for better fortune during a *dwungwuen* (MSC, *shengyun*) 'upturn of fortune' (Lust 1996:139).

¹ Spiritual beings (Chan 1963:790) that also represent reason guided by principles and morals rather than instincts or needs (Morant 1994:87).

² The Jade Emperor "the avatar of the Three Pure Ones" (Khoo 2014:23).

³ Known as Avalokitesvara "Goddess of Mercy" (Yu 2001:127).

⁴ A historical figure and a deity of imperial China (Terhaar 2017:1).

⁵ The magic effect or demonstration of a deity (Zavidovskaya 2012:191).

⁶ A spirit medium of a god (DeBernardi 2006:31).

FIG 6. A *szihueng* in Wuji Village (April 2020, Fu Qidu). The characters above the middle pillar read *Fu shi zongci* 'Fu Family Ancestral Hall'. The couplets on the left entrance read (right) *Xi ju baodi caiyuwang* '(We are) happy to live in such a wonderful place filled with wealth and prosperity'; (left) *Fu zhao jiamen fu sheng hui* 'Blessings come to the doors of our homes, and wealth comes to our families'. The couplets on the right entrance read (right) *Ji shan qianqiu cheng fofa* 'Accumulating goodness for a thousand years becomes a dharma'; (left) *Cibei wanzai xian shenming* 'Being compassionate for 10,000 years demonstrates the wisdom of deities'.



FIG 7. A *dwuenwo* in Wuji Village (April 2020, Fu Qidu). The horizontal scroll above the entrance reads *Shenling baoyou* 'Deities bless'. The couplets read (right) *Xian shi you ling zitaishun'an ge dezhi* 'Deities' magic effects are in the world and bless offspring who chant to their rule of virtue'; (left) *Ying ren suoyuan shanfeng haisheng nian gong'en* '(Deities) answer people's wishes for abundant food and people express gratitude to the deities for their blessings'.



FIG 8. A *dwuenwo* in Wuji Village (April 2020, Fu Qidu). The couplets read (right) *Baoyou tang zhong chang fawang* '(Deities) bless (our) homes to be forever prosperous'; (left) *Fuchi zhainei yong Xinglong* '(Deities) support the eternal prosperity of (our) families'.



LOCAL LANGUAGES

Based on my experiences and conversations with my family members, at least six (vernacular) languages are spoken in Wuji Village - Danzhounese, MSC, Cantonese, Hainanese, Hakka, and Lin'gao. Danzhounese and MSC are mutually unintelligible. Only certain Wuji villagers born in or before 1970 are conversant in Cantonese, Danzhounese, Hakka, MSC, and/or Lin'gao, whereas most villagers born after 1970 are fluent in MSC and Danzhounese. Around 1970, parents in Wuji Village devalued official schooling because it was expensive, rarely brought economic return, and occupied children's time that could be better spent on activities that would benefit the family, such as doing agricultural work outside the village to earn income. For example, one villager (b. 1970) gained fluency in Hakka and basic fluency in Cantonese through working with Hakka and Cantonese speakers outside of Wuji Village. In general, Danzhounese is the lingua franca and dominant language in Wuji Village.

A SURVEY OF THE LINGUISTIC SITUATION AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES IN WUJI VILLAGE

In describing Wuji villagers' linguistic abilities as reported from interviews, I asked: 1) What is the linguistic situation in Wuji Village? and 2) What are the villagers' sentiments about Danzhounese, Hakka, and MSC?

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected during fieldwork in February-March 2020¹ from interviews with thirty-two villagers in Wuji Village. Of the thirty-two participants, twenty-nine agreed to be recorded. Handwritten notes on data from the other three participants were taken. Genealogically-based sampling² was used to select interviewees.

The interviews were carried out primarily in Danzhounese and MSC. Moreover, to better assess research participants' language abilities, I encouraged interviewees to speak whatever (vernacular) languages they claimed proficiency in. Consequently, Hakka, Cantonese, and English were also used during certain interviews.

A consultant fluent in Danzhounese, Hakka, MSC, and a little Cantonese analyzed the Hakka interview recordings to ensure data validity and reliability.

The mean age of research participants (b. 1942-2010) was thirty-five. Twenty-three participants were Wuji villagers who had lived in Wuji Village for at least five years. Nine were visitors in Wuji Village (six from Huangkan and three from Panzhen villages).³ Participants' natal homes included the villages of Wuji (nineteen), Huangkan (five), Panzhen (three), Pingdi (Two), Tiejiang (one), and Lebian (one) in Danzhou City. One participant did not provide her natal home.

¹ I and all research participants had been in Wuji, Huangkan, Dalandi, Zixi, Zhongjianxiang, and Panzhen villages for at least twenty-two days before interviews were conducted. All participants consented to being interviewed and were aware of the COVID-19 pandemic. We all wore masks during the interviews. The prefecture government subdivision in charge of the local area had closed village borders, requiring outsiders to register and be tested before they were allowed entry. As of June 2020, no one in these villages had been reported as infected.

² Genealogically-based sampling "involves interviewing the kinsmen of one's assistant [and it] can be used profitably in field situations where random sampling is not possible" (O'Barr 1971:289).

³ Huangkan and Panzhen villages are both within a five-minute car-ride from Wuji Village and, based on my personal experiences, linguistically similar to Wuji Village. My mother's natal home is Huangkan Village and my father's sister married a Panzhen villager.

EVALUATION AND CATEGORIES

Participants' speaking abilities were evaluated and categorized as "speak fluently," "speak a little," and "do not speak" (see O' Barr 1971) based on self-reports. The consultant or I also evaluated their proficiency during interviews or by listening to the interview recordings. For Danzhounese and MSC proficiency, I assessed participants' speaking abilities as follows:

- Those who reported being fluent and responded to my Danzhounese/MSD questions without difficulties were considered "fluent speakers."
- Participants "speaking a little" had difficulty in understanding or speaking the language(s).
- Those who did not speak the language(s) included participants who, although self-reporting ability to speak the language(s) fluently or a little, when asked in the language(s), did not respond and gave no indication of understanding.

Six participants who claimed to speak a little MSD were unwilling to speak MSD, or spoke only a few words in MSD during the interviews. Therefore, I inquired about their MSD-related experiences and evaluated their MSD proficiency: 1) What were your MSD educational experiences? 2) When were you exposed to MSD, when did you begin speaking MSD, and how long have you spoken MSD? Based on their answers, I assessed their MSD competencies. "Fluent speakers" used MSD at work and interacted with MSD-speaking workmates or had at least completed elementary school education in which MSD was the instructional language. Of six, two completed elementary school and were, therefore, "fluent speakers." The other four "spoke a little" since they neither completed elementary education nor had much interaction with MSD speakers. Moreover, they did not understand some of my questions in MSD. However, they stated that they had learned a little MSD while attending elementary school, from their grandchildren, and/or association with MSD-speakers.

In terms of Hakka proficiency, I used the consultant's assessments. If the evaluations were unavailable, I used the participants' self-reports. In this study, fifteen participants self-reported speaking Hakka fluently or a little, but only two spoke Hakka during the interviews. Therefore, the consultant only evaluated these two participants' Hakka recordings. Data of the other thirteen participants' Hakka oral proficiency was based on self-reports.

I evaluated the English proficiency of the single participant who claimed to know English by asking questions and listening to her responses in English.

For Cantonese, Hainanese, and Lin'gao, data was based on participants' self-reports.

RESULTS

Language Abilities

FIG 9 shows participants' language abilities in Danzhounese, MSD, Hakka, and other (vernacular) languages.¹ Within the category of "other (vernacular) languages," participants were placed in one of the three groups: "speaks fluently," "speaks a little," or "does not speak," based on vernacular language proficiency assessment. If participants had varied proficiency in multiple vernaculars, they were placed in one of the three groups mentioned earlier according to their highest language proficiency.

¹ The category of "other (vernacular) languages" includes MSD, Hakka, and Danzhounese, but includes any other dialects and languages (e.g., English) spoken by research participants.

For instance, if a participant spoke fluent Hainanese, a little Cantonese, and a little Lin'gao, they were placed in "speaks fluently."

FIG 10. Participants' language proficiency in Danzhounese, MSC, Hakka, and other (vernacular) languages.

Language/Dialect	Language Proficiency		Speaks Fluently		Speaks A Little		Does Not Speak		All Participants	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Danzhounese	32	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	32	100
MSC	27	84	5	16	0	0	0	0	32	100
Hakka	6	19	9	28	17	53	32	100	32	100
Other (vernacular) Languages	6	19	10	31	16	50	32	100	32	100

FIG 10 shows that all research participants spoke Danzhounese fluently, with thirty speaking Danzhounese as their first language regardless of their origins. The youngest participants - Xue Li and Xue Wang (twin sisters, b. 2010 in Wuji Village) - attended elementary school in urban Danzhou City and often stayed in Wuji Village with their paternal grandmother during school breaks in summer and winter holidays, and weekends. The Xue twins acquired MSC as their first language from communication with family members fluent in MSC and from K-4 education. They learned Danzhounese from interacting with their paternal grandmother, who is monolingual. The twins' family members converse in Danzhounese but speak MSC to Xue Li and Xue Wang. Danzhounese use and exposure in Wuji Village contribute to the sisters' Danzhounese fluency.

Regarding MSC proficiency, twenty-seven participants (eighty-four percent) spoke MSC fluently, achieved mainly through formal education, work, or communication with those who did not speak Danzhounese.

Five participants (sixteen percent) spoke a little MSC. However, they neither completed elementary education nor had much interaction with MSC speakers.

Regarding Hakka proficiency, six participants (nineteen percent) spoke fluent Hakka acquired while attending schools, working with Hakka speakers, or interacting with Hakka-speaking spouses/relatives. For example, a female participant whose first language is Danzhounese had been married to her Hakka-speaking husband for twenty years and gained Hakka proficiency through interaction with him, his relatives, and Hakka-speaking customers she sells clothing to.

"Other (vernacular) languages" in Wuji Village included five and nine participants who spoke fluent and a little Cantonese, respectively; two knew a little Hainanese; two spoke Lin'gao - one fluently and one "a little"; and one (b. 1990) was fluent in English. The five research participants fluent in these vernacular languages were born in 1961 (one) and 1970 (four). Of these five, one was proficient in Cantonese and Lin'gao. They learned a little or gained fluency in these vernacular languages through interaction with speakers of these languages. For instance, one participant (b. 1970) became a driver after returning home from factory work in Guangdong Province, where he had learned to speak Cantonese by communicating with workmates. The participant (b. 1990) with fluent English graduated from a vocational college with a major in English in 2013 and then worked in a Singapore restaurant (2013-2016).

Age and MSC Fluency

Age and fluency in MSC are shown in Table Two. Participants were divided into two groups based on age. Participants' median age was thirty-five (b. 1985). "Speak MSC less than fluently" included those who "speak a little MSC" and "do not speak MSC."

FIG 11. Participants' age and MSC proficiency.

<div>MSC Proficiency</div> <div>Age</div>	Speak MSC Fluently		Speak MSC Less Than Fluently		All Participants	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Born After 1985	16	100	0	0	16	100
Born Before 1985	11	69	5	31	16	100

FIG 11 shows that those born after 1985 were all fluent in MSC; however, only sixty-nine percent of the older generation (born before 1985) were fluent in MSC. Five participants (thirty-one percent) spoke a little MSC.

The younger cohorts were schooled in MSC. Xiao Ming (b. 2009) and Xue Li (b. 2010) are fifth-grade and fourth-grade students in Luoji Village and urban Danzhou City, respectively. Their education is in MSC. Textbooks are in MSC, teachers instruct in MSC at school, and schoolmates mostly speak MSC. Other participants born after 1985 who completed elementary education gained MSC fluency through schooling or language use after schooling by working with MSC speakers, using MSC media, or texting in MSC.

However, five participants (thirty-one percent; b. 1973, 1971, 1967, 1965, and 1942) who neither went to nor completed elementary school and had little interaction with MSC speakers spoke only a little MSC. The highest school education among these participants was fourth-grade. Unable to read or write a letter or a text message in MSC, they had been farmers for their entire lives. They lived at home caring for their grandchildren; cultivating tomatoes, eggplants, carrots, and so on for self-consumption; or "doing nothing" (unemployed). They learned a little MSC through interaction with their grandchildren and communicating with non-Danzhounese speakers.

The group just described expressed interest in learning MSC during the interviews. The oldest participant, Ma Ya (b. 1942), who spoke a little MSC, said:

I am especially delighted that all my grandchildren have attended or are attending school. Literate people move my heart a lot. However, I cannot wholly support my grandchildren financially. That said, I try to save my monthly government subsidies for the elderly to help my grandchildren in school. ... I hope that everyone knows Putonghua. But what can you do when people just do not know Putonghua? ... When going (to a bank) to get monthly subsidies from the government for the elderly with my friends - all eight of us - I sign their names for them [at their request]. ... Even if some are illiterate, like me,¹ they can still speak Putonghua. If people try their best to learn, they can speak Putonghua without being literate.

¹ She wrote the Chinese characters for her own name and the names of her friends, and recognized a few characters, such as the characters in her name when they were put together in the order of family and given names. She found it difficult to recognize the characters in her name individually when they were separated.

Language Attitudes

FIG 12. Participants' language attitudes towards the use of Danzhounese, MSC, and Hakka.

Question	Answer		Yes		No		Participants	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Is it better to use/learn Danzhounese than MSC?	4	14	25	86	29	100		
Is it better to use/learn Hakka than Danzhounese?	1	4	27	96	28	100		
Is MSC a must for everyone to learn nowadays?	25	86	4	14	29	100		
Will you teach future generations Danzhounese, i.e., your children or grandchildren?	31	100	0	0	31	100		

Eighty-six percent of participants believed that learning MSC was a must for everyone to learn nowadays and that it was better to use MSC than Danzhounese because:

- MSC is Guoyu 'the national language', so every Chinese citizen should put it first.
- MSC is the lingua franca for all the people of China, and speaking it allows interaction with those who do not speak Danzhounese.
- MSC brings economic benefit since most people speak MSC when engaging in business in formal settings.
- Villagers can show hospitality by speaking MSC to visitors who do not understand Danzhounese.
- Society is becoming more MSC-centered; therefore, MSC fluency keeps pace with social development.
- Learning MSC facilitates literacy acquisition.

Xiao Ming's and Xue Li's aforementioned educational experiences demonstrate that the language of K-5 schooling in local areas is all in MSC. Children who do not speak MSC early in their lives may have lower literacy levels than those who speak MSC as their first language, and they may be at a disadvantage in understanding teachers' instructions and textbooks. Furthermore, interaction with schoolmates during their first year at school may be limited.

From my experiences in local elementary and secondary schools, education at elementary and secondary levels in Danzhou City was in MSC, and speaking MSC was encouraged. Posters and signs reminded students to speak only MSC at school, and teachers (bilingual in MSC and Danzhounese) answered students' questions in MSC, even when students raised questions in Danzhounese. Non-native speakers of MSC were at a disadvantage in terms of gaining literacy and educational achievements.

Ninety-six percent of participants asserted that learning/using Danzhounese is better than Hakka. Fourteen percent of participants agreed learning/using Danzhounese is better than MSC for the following reasons:

- Danzhounese is the language of Wuji Village's history, traditions, customs, and culture. Danzhou

*ediang*¹ (MSC, *diaosheng*) and *dango*² (MSC, *shan'ge*) 'folksongs' are expressed in Danzhounese. According to Yang (1988; 1993), *ediang* is a vital aspect of Danzhou local customs, cultures, and traditions.

- Danzhounese is the language that villagers use daily in Wuji Village and is integral to their identity.
- Hakka or MSC is thirty participants' second/third/fourth language, even for those fluent in Hakka/MSC. Consequently, they might feel more comfortable speaking Danzhounese than Hakka/MSC. Feeling more comfortable speaking their first language explains why six participants were unwilling to speak or spoke only a little MSC during the interviews.
- With greater proficiency in Danzhounese than Hakka/MSC, Danzhounese should be used more than Hakka/MSC. On the contrary, they lacked confidence in communicating in MSC with speakers of greater MSC proficiency. During interviews, when asked about their oral MSC competencies, they responded, "I know a little Putonghua;" "my Putonghua is not good;" or "my Putonghua is strongly accented;" even though the majority spoke easily comprehensible MSC fluently. They might have lacked confidence in communicating in MSC because they believed I had greater MSC competency.

However, one participant suggested that Hakka is better than Danzhounese because Hakka is "soft" - it sounds nice and friendly - while Danzhounese is "hard" - it sounds harsh and unfriendly to those who do not speak it.

Four participants (fourteen percent) said MSC is not a must to learn because, as declared earlier, Danzhounese is the language medium of their traditions and integral to their identity, e.g., "I am a Danzhou person, so I should speak Danzhounese."

All participants declared they would teach Danzhounese to the future generations for its communicative functions with village elders and function as the language medium of village traditions. However, eighty-six percent (not indicated in the tables), who valued MSC more than Danzhounese, stated that learning Danzhounese is not essential but valuable to have as a language; MSC is the priority in terms of language learning. While participants had a strong affection for Danzhounese, it is probably less intense than in the past.

DISCUSSION

The linguistic environment in Wuji Village includes Danzhounese, Hakka, MSC, Lin'gao, Cantonese, Hainanese, and English. There may be more vernacular language(s) spoken in Wuji Village, such as Junhua. Wuji villagers regularly interact with Junhua speakers who often live in Nada Town (Liu 2001:50), particularly in urban areas. All participants in this study were fluent in Danzhounese. Eighty-four percent were fluent MSC speakers (sixteen percent could speak a little). All Wuji villagers are proficient in Danzhounese; most are bilingual (Danzhounese and MSC); and some are multilingual (conversant in Danzhounese, MSC, Hakka, Cantonese, and/or Hainanese).

Emotional attachment to Danzhounese, though deeply rooted, is weakening. Participants expressed affection for Danzhounese and encouraged Danzhounese learning. Nevertheless, eighty-four percent stated that it was not necessary to be proficient in Danzhounese. From my childhood experiences as a Wuji Villager, villagers my age and older easily acquired Danzhounese as a first language. Before 2005, villagers, including children, actively engaged in village *ediang* and *dango* gatherings. During the Mooncake Festival (the fifteenth day of the eighth lunisolar month), villagers

¹ A "variant" of Han folksongs (Yang 1988; 1993).

² A type of folksong (Chen 2016; Fu 1996).

went to municipal areas in Danzhou City to enjoy or participate in *ediang*. I performed *ediang* when I was a child but later forgot *ediang* melodies and lyrics. In 2020, I was unable to perform *ediang*.

Furthermore, performing *ediang* during Chunjie was a village tradition before 2005. Villagers gathered and made plans for *ediang* approximately ten days before Chunjie. However, after that time, I rarely heard mention of village *ediang* or *dango* gatherings. Instead, villagers focused on MSC media for entertainment, such as Weixin 'WeChat' and Douyin 'TikTok'.

Wuji Villagers' attitudes towards Danzhounese, Hakka, and MSC vary. Ninety-six percent felt that the use of Danzhounese is better than that of Hakka, and eighty-six percent held the idea that MSC use is better vis-à-vis Danzhounese. In terms of MSC learning, eighty-six percent agreed that everyone should learn MSC nowadays, including Ma Ya, the oldest participant.

The linguistic situation of Wuji Village will inevitably continue altering with the increase in MSC learning and use and a decline in village vernacular language learning and use. Furthermore, based on this study and my life experiences, fluent Hakka, Hainanese, Cantonese, and/or Lin'gao speakers were generally born in 1970 or earlier. Those born after this time were generally unable to speak these village languages. As mentioned earlier, these vernaculars are minority languages in Wuji Village, and pressure from Danzhounese and MSC negatively impacts learning these minority languages. This is a general trend, e.g., minority languages in Tibet (Roche 2017), in western Sichuan Province (Roche and Tsomu 2018), across China (Xu 2013:261), and in Asia as a whole (Loh and Harmon 2014:39).

However, in 2020, bilingual ability in Danzhounese and MSC seems assured in the near future. All villagers are expected to be fluent in Danzhounese and MSC. Eighty-six percent of participants prioritized MSC learning because MSC fluency facilitates success, leading to more income-earning opportunities. Fourteen percent viewed Danzhounese as the priority with language learning due to its functions of constructing villagers' identity as "a Danzhou person" and inheriting village traditions.

Eventually, MSC is likely to replace Danzhounese as the dominant village language. Though this study suggests villagers have a deep emotional attachment to Danzhounese and Danzhounese learning, the practical use of MSC beyond the village has a significant negative impact. The economic and communicative benefits of MSC-speaking may limit villagers' motivation to learn Danzhounese. This finding aligns with the general trend of minority language marginalization in China. Examples are the marginalization of Guiqiongyu 'the Gochang language'¹ in Sichuan Province (Roche and Tsomu 2018), and the Dan language/dialect in Hainan Province (Mao 2019). Minority languages in China have become marginalized in "their social domain and communicative functions," because of economic globalization and language imperialism (Xu 2013:269).

Xiao Ming's, Xue Li's, and my educational experiences indicate the use of MSC in education may further impede the learning of Wuji vernaculars. Wang et al. noted (2013:57-65) sustainable mechanisms involving "working systems, institutions and research teams" have been established to ensure language standardization in China, including standardized assessments, Chinese characters, and Chinese pronunciations/sounds in education. Chen et al. (2014:9-11) reported that the Ministry of Education's Language Information Administration launched Putonghua and Chinese character usage proficiency tests in 1994 and 2007, respectively, to evaluate "the ability of educated users" MSC, including "pronunciation, meaning, and usage." As students in a university teacher education program, my cohorts and I, regardless of our ethnicities, were required to pass a Putonghua proficiency test as part of teacher professional certification.

Besides, ethnic minority teachers were provided Putonghua training on a national level to improve their MSC pronunciation (Chen et al. 2014:13-14). However, education in the standardized

¹ A Qiangish language in the Tibeto-Burman subfamily (Sun 2015:551).

language(s) plays a role in the decline of learning minority languages across China (Xu 2013). For example, minority languages in China's Tibetan areas are vanishing due to education and "assimilatory pressure" from dominant and standardized languages (Roche 2017:24). Moreover, Xue Li's and Xue Wang's MSC language learning experiences suggest that their parents' communication with them primarily in MSC will diminish their fluency in Danzhounese.

This study's limitations include data from participant self-reports of Hakka, Cantonese, Hainanese, and Lin'gao proficiency. Only two participants spoke Hakka during the interviews, with their Hakka proficiency later assessed by the consultant. Thirteen other participants claimed fluency in or self-reported knowing a little Hakka did not speak Hakka during interviews. Data on oral competency in Cantonese, Hainanese, and Lin'gao was based on participants' self-reports.

This study suggests various vernaculars may be marginalized due to education in MSC and pressure from MSC and Danzhounese. MSC is likely to displace Danzhounese as Wuji Village's majority language. Investigation into the causes of marginalization and decline of vernacular language promises insights into attrition, shift, and degree of maintenance in Wuji Village.

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CHINESE TERMS

- Baisha 白沙 County
 Baoting 保亭 County
baoying 报应
Baoyou tang zhong chang fawang 保佑堂中长
 发旺
 Bendi 本地 dialects
 Chengmai 澄迈 County
 Chunjie 春节
 Cibei wanzai xian shenming 慈悲万载显神明
citing 祠堂
 Cunhua 村话
 Dalandi 大兰地 Village
 Dan 蛋 language/dialect
 Danzhou 儋州 City
diaosheng 调声
 Douyin 抖音
 Duanwu 端午
 Fu nanjin 符南进 mingdai weiwu dajiangjun 明
 代威武大将军
 Fu shi zongci 符氏祠堂
 Fu zhao jiamen fu sheng hui 福照家门富生辉
Fuchi zhainei yong xinglong 扶持宅内永兴隆
 Fujian 福建 Province
 Gan 赣 dialects
 Guangdong 广东 Province
 Guangxi 广西 Zhuang 壮族 Autonomous
 Region
 Guanyin 观音
 Guanyu 关羽
 Guiqiongyu 贵琼语
 Guoyu 国语
 Haikou 海口 City
 Hainan 海南 Province
 Hainanhua 海南话
 Han 汉族
 Huangkan 黄坎 Village
Ji shan qianqiu cheng fofa 积善千秋成佛法
 Jiamao 加茂 dialects
 Jilin 吉林 Province
 Junhua 军话
 Lebian 乐便 Village
 Li 黎族
 Li-Miao 黎苗
 Lin'gao 临高 language/dialect
ling 灵
 Lingshui 陵水
 Liyu 黎语
 Luoji 洛基 Village
 Meifu 美孚 dialects
 Mian 勉 language/dialect
 Miaoyu 苗语
 Min 闽南 dialects
 Ming huangtaizu chifeng weiwu dajiangjun
 funanjin gong zhi 明太祖敕封威武大将军符
 南进公之
 Nada 那大 Town
 Nadouhua 那斗话
 Panzhen 番真 Village
 Pingdi 平地 Village
 Putonghua 普通话
 Qi 杞 dialects
 Qionghai 琼海 City
 Sanya 三亚 City
shange 山歌
shen 神
 Sheng zhixia xianji xingzhengqu 省直辖县级行
 政区
shengyun 升运
Shenling baoyou 神灵保佑
shenwu 神屋
 Shenzhen 深圳 City
 Sichuan 四川 Province
 Tiejiang 铁匠 Village
tongzi 童子
 Wangning 万宁 City
 weixin 微信, WeChat
 Wuhan 武汉 City
 Wuji 屋基 Village
Xi ju baodi caiyuwang 喜居宝地财与旺
Xian shi you ling zitaishun'an ge dezhi 显世有灵
 子泰孙安歌德治
 Xiao 俸 dialects
 Ying ren suoyuan shanfeng haisheng nian
 gong'en 应人所愿山丰海盛念公恩
 Yudi 玉帝
 Yue 粤 dialects
 Zhongjianxiang 中间巷 Village
 Zixi 子熙 Village
zongzi 粽子